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27 April 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Director for National Estimates

SUBJECT: The Kurds in 1959, CIA/RR OR L-60-2

REFERENCE: Your Memorandum to Chief/C/RR dated 14 April 1960, Same Subject

1. Your comments on OR L-60-2 have been studied here with great care. Fortunately, it appears that there is no real disparity in our viewpoints, though some explanation may be appropriate.

2. Let me first comment on the context in which the report was prepared. A little over a year ago, we were directed to undertake a basic collation, analysis, and evaluation of intelligence and other materials on the Kurds. At the time, we were rather reluctant to get involved in the project, which required a massive, across-the-board effort that covered all fields of information related to the Kurds. However, we represent the principal body of area research specialists in the ORR/I and were tagged to do it. As you are doubtless aware, there are thousands of sources available on the Kurds, but no consolidated body of information, just as there are no fully knowledgeable Kurd specialists. Our task was to research and prepare such a consolidation for the clandestine services. The results, which are now nearly complete, have taken the form of an information file of some 2,000 cross-indexed, annotated cards and the brief synthesis or highlights that is the subject of your comments. Both the file and the report were prepared for use by the requester only.

3. The publication vehicle for the project is "Geographic Report" because that is the research report series assigned to us by the Publications Board; in our opinion, it is probably as appropriate a series as any other. We find, in any event, that in supporting operational requirements we are rarely able to operate within the limited concept of geography which emphasizes physical environment and location. We are necessarily concerned also with a potpourri of elements related to cultural environment. In short, in supporting operational requirements we must try to deal with the totality of the problem with which the operation is concerned. It is very rare that we burrow into "political analysis and prognostication", but on occasion it is necessary to review or summarize some political facts, trends, and environment. In this limited analysis, of course, the area specialist is generally capable enough.

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4. Your essential criticism, directed at the last section of the report, is a bit difficult to handle since the conflicting viewpoint is stated very generally. Actually, however, I don't think there is any conflict. The major part of the section is a historical rounding on Kurdish national movements intended to answer part of the synthesis needs of the requester. The last part of the section, where the apparent conflict really lies, was intended to be a summation of current possibilities and their ingredients. On the face of it, the report here would seem to be in disagreement with your memorandum of 8 April 1959. However, the two analyses are not directly comparable. You will note that the ONE discussion was not based on any particular assumptions; that is, it treats the Kurds without reference to specific political contexts or eventualities. In our case, the discussion (rather, summarization) treats the prospects of the Kurds specifically in the content of potential political developments. We assume, in other words, the prior existence of specific favorable conditions ("In the event of disturbances . . . that would seriously impair . . . ."; "Should circumstances permit . . . ."; "Should the government . . . fall . . . ."). A similar commentary was included in our CIA/RR IP 60-2:L, The Kurds, January 1960, prepared for ONE at [redacted] request. Given its different point of view, we are really in full accord with your 8 April 1959 memorandum and deviate from it only in extending the summary to cover changed conditions.

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5. We would not, as you do not, see much likelihood of a Kurdish Republic appearing. In this context, we may have misled the reader by not stating explicitly that a harmony of the stated elements, or an overpowering influence of one of them, would be required for success of a Kurdish autonomy movement. However, we conclude from available evidence and opinion that the possibility does exist, at least to the extent that the clandestine services should be aware of it. And, of course, an independent Kurdish state need not embrace all of Kurdistan; the original Mahabad Republic was only 100 x 75 miles in width and located entirely in Iran.

6. I hope that the above adequately answers the concern that you felt. I should welcome any further comments that your people may have. Somewhat gratuitously, I should also like to suggest that meetings such as that which preceded your 8 April 1959 memorandum might, when feasible, include intelligence officers from this shop. I feel that our environmental expertise could be very useful in such discussions.

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(signed)

[redacted]

Chief, Geographic Research
Research and Reports

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